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Letters

LIES AND RUMORS

TO THE EDITOR:

Ben Bagdikian was perhaps too polite to call all the distortions, misinformation and falsities spread by the communications media of the world "rumors," since most of the examples quoted by him were simple lies. But I am sure it is a rumor spread by him that there is a "Disinformation Office" in Moscow ("Rumors: Their Birth, Growth and Death," June 14).

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The author comments: "Existence of such a bureau is asserted in Allen Dulles's book, 'The Craft of Intelligence' (Harper & Row, 1963), p. 150 in which the former director of C.I.A. writes, 'The Soviets have centralized the responsibility for planning and launching deception operations in a special department of the State Security Service (KGB) known as the "Disinformation Bureau." It is also referred to by Alexander Orlov, a Russian intelligence defector, in his book, 'Handbook of Intelligence and Guerrilla Warfare' (University of Michigan Press, 1963), pp. 20-21, 'The fourth line of Soviet intelligence is the so-called "Misinformation." The Soviet Government

is interested not only in obtaining information about policies and impending moves of foreign governments, but also in misinforming and misleading the governments of foreign countries concerning its own positions and intentions.' The name of the Bureau is 'Dezinformatsiya,' which, according to the Third Edition of Smirnitsky's standard English-Russian dictionary, means 'misinformation.' However, in standard usage by Soviet and other intelligence officials, it is called 'Disinformation.'"

SALES TALK

TO THE EDITOR:

Mr. Bagdikian's article about the influence of rumors recalled to mind a story on the subject told by our Army orientation officer some years ago.

When a real estate broker appeared at the heavenly gates, he was informed that the corner reserved for the real estate group was already fully occupied. However, the broker assured St. Peter that he could easily make room for himself if left to his own devices; all he needed was a soapbox.

His curiosity aroused, the gatekeeper assented and ushered the broker to the space

where his professional colleagues dwelled. The new arrival mounted the soapbox and, in a voice trembling with excitement, told the crowd that oil had just been discovered in hell. Hysteria and pandemonium followed. Within seconds, the corner was empty as the crowd rushed to stake their claims below.

To his astonishment, the gatekeeper noticed the enterprising broker among the frenzied runners and inquired: "I can understand why *they* are running, but why *you*?"

zied runners. He succeeded in

"Who knows?" the broker

shouted back. "Maybe there's some truth to this rumor."

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